

Relationship Between Peer Victimization, Perceived Social Support & Academic Self-Regulation: A Study Among Adolescents

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Abstract: Adolescence, it is a developmental period (13 to 19 years) results in various physical and psychosocial changes. Bullying in schools was often treated as a regular issue, leading to increased Peer Victimization among students, along with noticeable differences in their levels of Perceived Social Support and Academic Self-Regulation. The study aims to explore the relationship between peer victimization, perceived social support and academic self-regulation among adolescents and to identify gender differences among these. The sample included 150 adolescents, 75 boys and 75 girls (13-18 years), selected through convenient sampling technique. Data was analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation and independent sample t-test. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between verbal victimization and external regulation and that of social manipulation and perceived social support among adolescents, while a significant negative correlation between verbal victimization and perceived social support were also notable finding. There has been a significant gender difference in attack on property subscale of peer victimization, indicating that boys tend to experience them more while social support was reported to be more among girls. The findings emphasize the need for supportive peer and adult relationships and the development of socially inclusive school environments that address bullying and other forms of peer victimization.

Keywords: Academic Self-Regulation, Adolescence, Peer Victimization, Perceived Social Support.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the crucial period that regulates the gap between adulthood and childhood. According to World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence ages of 10 to 19 (WHO, 2024). It is the period where individuals come up with drastic changes especially in social, emotional, cognitive and physical level (Steinberg, 2014). Major changes in development of identities as peer influences plays a major role, increased need for autonomy, high levels of energy, and heightened curiosity makes the phase different (Santrock, 2019).

Bullying is a significant social and psychological concern during adolescence. Experiences of bullying may negatively affect the individual's emotional, social and psychological well-being (UNESCO, 2019) Comparing to other age groups, adolescence tend to involve more in

Bullying and more of them were reported being victimized (Holt et al., 2015). Among that a good number of children have reported bullying from schools. About 30% to 60% adolescents in India have reported being bullied by peer groups (Kumar et al., 2011). In India, bullying among adolescents is a significant concern as it affects their overall wellbeing. In Kerala recent reports on peer victimization also chains the prevalence of bullying among school children, the report from one of the highly developed districts of Kerala, a study by Kodapally et.al (2021) conducted in Kozhikode district revealed that 15.3% were experienced bullying twice in a month, Ernakulum points a terrible suicide by extreme bullying in school and case in Wayanad again reports a suicide by severe bullying by the peers (Mathrubhumi, 2024; NDTV, 2024).

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior which involves repeated harm and a power imbalance between the person who is bullying and the person who is targeted (Olweus, D.,1993). Bullying includes physical aggression, verbal aggression, and social exclusion. Victimization means the experience of being harmed, mistreated or exposed to aggression by another person (NASEM, 2016), it has got an extensive concern among adolescents, and may contribute to emotional, social, psychological and behavioral consequences. (Hawker & Boulton., 2000). Peer Victimization referred as a distressing experience characterized by aggressive behavior that lead by peers to an individual (Card & Hodges., 2008).

Theoretically, Peer Victimization happens when someone wants to show power or control over others as explained by Dominance theory (Long & Pellegrino., 2002). Humiliation theory suggests that peer victimization is linked to feelings of humiliation or fear of being humiliated (Lindner, 2002). According to peer response theory, peer victimization is more likely to continue if peers silently accept it or laugh (Salmivalli, 2010).

Social support is an essential element for wellbeing of the individual psychologically, especially during childhood and adolescence (Cobb, 1976). Social support is defined as the knowledge that a person is cared for, respected and connected to a wide social group that express concern of the person's wellbeing. It refers to the network of people who provide care, assistance and encouragement and the awareness that one is loved (House, 1981)

Perceived social support act as a protective factor against various psychological stressors. Victims of peer victimization reported that lower levels of perceived social support when compared to non-victimized peers. Studies shows that peer victimization may impair a child's ability to maintain o form relationships that may lead to social isolation and withdrawal (Demaray and Malecki; 2006, Holt and Espelage; 2007 and Sharp, Thompson, and Arora; 2000). If adolescence perceives that they lack support from the significant people in their lives, it may lead to feel helpless, emotional difficulties, even may trigger the aggression. In contrast, adolescence who perceives high levels of support are more likely to feel empowered, able to cope effectively with stress.

Theoretically the concept of perceived social support can be understood on different ends. According to stress buffering hypothesis, perceived social support serves as a protective factor by reducing the adverse effects of stress on an individual's wellbeing. According to this model, when individuals encounter stressful situations those who perceive greater social support are better able to manage and cope with stressors (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Perceived social support serve as a buffer against the psychological, emotional, behavioral risks associated with peer victimization. By fostering environments where adolescence feels supported, valued and connected can make a significant enhance in the wellbeing and resilience in adolescence (Rueger et al., 2010).

Academic self-regulation refers specifically to the regulation of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies aimed at academic achievement. It includes the ability to manage attention, persist through academic tasks, set learning goals, and evaluate one's progress in learning contexts (Zimmerman.,2000).

Bandura's Social Cognitive theory explains about self-regulation, according to social cognitive theory self-regulation is governed by three process self-observation that is monitoring one's actions, judgment that is evaluating one's actions against standards, self-reaction that means responding emotionally or behaviorally to these judgments. Self-regulation allows individuals to evaluate their behaviors and respond based on internalized standards and external expectations (Bandura., 1991).

Ryan and Deci, argue that fostering more internal forms of motivation supports deeper learning and sustained engagement. In academic settings, teachers can encourage intrinsic motivation by supporting student autonomy, offering meaningful feedback, and providing opportunities for choice and exploration. Integrating Self Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of self-regulation. While Self Determination Theory emphasizes the quality and origin of motivation, Social Cognitive Theory focuses on self-efficacy and the regulatory mechanisms individuals use to direct their behavior. Both frameworks highlight the importance of internal psychological processes and external social influences in shaping behavior (Ryan & Deci; 2000). The development of academic self-regulation, influenced by internal and external motivational factors, is vital for student success. Theories like Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Determination Theory offer valuable frameworks for understanding how individuals regulate their behavior and motivation in learning environments.

Peer victimization may affect adolescence confidence, sense of security and willingness to participate in school activities. The effect of Peer Victimization may affect the individual's Academic Self-regulation among adolescence. The harmful effects of Peer Victimization can be reduced or addressed by Perceived Social Support. Developing insights to individuals as well as creating or developing a bullying free environment can lead to academic wellbeing as well as personal growth and overall wellbeing.

➤ *The Present Study*

Although a wide-ranging of researches have examined peer victimization, perceived social support, and academic self-regulation among adolescents, there remain several gaps in understanding the interrelationships among these variables. Earlier studies have primarily focused on the consequences of peer victimization, at various psychological aspect especially emotional levels and the protective role of social support, while relatively less attention has been given to how perceived social support may influence adolescents' academic behaviors, motivation, and self-regulatory processes in the context of peer victimization.

In addition, the potential roles of demographic factor, including gender, have not been sufficiently examined. Although previous research has investigated various dimensions of bullying and victimization, comparatively limited attention has been given to gender differences in adolescents' experiences of peer victimization and their association with perceived social support and academic self-regulation. This is important especially for this developing period, since there are so many differences that come in to notice during adolescence.

Importantly, peer victimization, perceived social support, and academic self-regulation have often been studied as separate concepts. Subsequently, limited research has discovered how these three factors are incorporated within an interconnected framework and how they are related to adolescents' academic and psychosocial development. This integrated perspective would be useful to provide a basis for developing more targeted interventions aimed at supporting adolescents experiencing peer-related difficulties. Thus the study aims to explore the relationship between peer victimization, perceived social support and academic self-regulation among adolescents and to identify gender differences among them.

➤ *Sample and Procedure*

The study employed a cross-sectional design, and data were collected through offline administration of the study. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling from various schools in Calicut district of Kerala. The final sample consisted of 150 adolescents aged 13–18 years, including 75 boys and 75 girls. The researchers approached eligible participants through the selected data-collection setting and provided a brief explanation of the purpose and procedures of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants and their parents with the help of school authorities prior to data collection. The study procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical principles for research involving human participants. Sociodemographic information, including age and gender, was recorded. The data were subsequently analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation and independent-samples *t* tests.

II. MEASURES

➤ *Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard & Joseph, 2000)*

The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard & Joseph, 2000) is a 16 item self-report measure designed to measure different forms of peer victimization among adolescents. It uses a 3 point Likert scale that is 0 = Not at all, 1 = Once, 2 = More than once. The MPVS comprises four subscales, each with four items: Physical Victimization (e.g., being hit or kicked), Verbal Victimization (e.g., being called names), Social Manipulation (e.g., peers turning others against you), and Attacks on Property (e.g., belongings being stolen or damaged).

Psychometric studies consistently support the internal consistency reliability of the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, with Cronbach's alpha for the total scale typically exceeding .80, and the subscales also showing acceptable reliability.

➤ *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimmet et.al, 1998)*

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Zimmet et al. (1988) is a 12-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess individuals' perceptions of social support from three distinct sources: Family, Friends, and a Significant Other. Each subscale contains four items, and responses are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Very strongly disagree to 7 = Very strongly agree, with higher scores indicating greater perceived social support. Psychometric evaluations consistently demonstrate high internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values generally above .85 for the total scale and ranging between .81 and .91 for the subscales across different populations. In terms of validity, factor analyses support construct validity.

➤ *Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire SRQ-A (Ryan & Connell, 1989)*

The Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A), developed by Ryan and Connell (1989), is a self-report that measures students' motivational styles and their their academic behavior. The SRQ-A contains items that correspond to four types of regulation: External Regulation (behavior driven by external rewards or punishments), Introjected Regulation (behavior driven by internal pressures such as guilt or obligation), Identified Regulation (behavior guided by personal goals or valuing of the task), and Intrinsic Regulation (behavior driven by genuine interest and enjoyment). Responses are typically rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Not at all true to 4 = Very true, with higher scores on each subscale. Psychometric studies provide strong evidence for the reliability of the Academic Self-regulation Questionnaire, with Cronbach's alpha values for the subscales generally falling between .62 and .82, demonstrating acceptable to internal consistency.

III. RESULTS

Table 1 Correlation Between Domains of Peer Victimization, Perceived Social Support and Academic Self-Regulation Among Adolescents

Variable	VV	PV	SM	AP	PSS	ASR
Verbal Victimization						
Physical Victimization					-0.12	-0.27**
Social Manipulation						
Attack on Property					-0.10	-0.2*
Perceived Social Support	-0.20*		-0.25**			0.44**
Academic Self Regulation	-0.34**		-0.39**			

“* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ ”.

Table 2 Gender Differences Using Independent Sample T Test Among Adolescents with Respect to Peer Victimization, Perceived Social Support and Academic Self-Regulation

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p	t
Physical victimization	Boys	75	2.56	2.532	0.695	-0.393
	Girls	75	2.72	2.453	0.695	-0.393
Verbal victimization	Boys	75	3.99	2.458	0.109	1.611
	Girls	75	3.35	2.408	0.109	1.611
Social manipulation	Boys	75	2.61	2.053	0.938	0.78
	Girls	75	2.59	2.144	0.938	0.78
Attack on property	Boys	75	3.52	2.310	0.000	4.073
	Girls	75	2.09	1.967	0.000	4.073
Perceived social Support	Boys	75	5.24	1.089	0.001	-3.322
	Girls	75	5.79	0.920	0.001	-3.322
External regulation	Boys	75	23.96	4.897	0.665	0.434
	Girls	75	23.61	4.890	0.665	0.434
Introjected regulation	Boys	75	21.99	4.950	0.756	-0.312
	Girls	75	22.29	6.936	0.756	-0.312
Identified regulation	Boys	75	20.20	4.198	0.427	-0.796
	Girls	75	20.79	4.805	0.427	-0.796
Intrinsic motivation	Boys	75	15.53	4.581	0.157	1.422
	Girls	75	14.53	4.015	0.157	1.422

*Significant at 0.05 Level

The present study examined the relationships among peer victimization, perceived social support, and academic self-regulation among adolescents and investigated gender differences in these variables. The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that there was no significant correlation between perceived social support and academic self-regulation among adolescents ($p > .05$). Verbal victimization and social manipulation were significantly and negatively correlated with perceived social support ($p < .01$). This indicates that adolescents reporting higher levels of verbal victimization and social manipulation tended to report lower levels of perceived social support. A significant positive correlation between verbal victimization and external regulation ($p < .05$). Thus, higher levels of verbal victimization were associated with greater reliance on externally regulated forms of academic motivation. The gender comparisons shown in table 2 showed no significant gender differences in physical victimization, verbal victimization, or social manipulation. However, a significant gender difference was observed in attack on property, with boys reporting higher levels than girls. A significant gender difference was also found in perceived social support, with girls reporting higher levels of perceived social support than boys. No significant gender difference was observed in academic self-regulation.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the relationships among peer victimization, perceived social support, and academic self-regulation among adolescents, along with gender differences among these variables. The finding that perceived social support was not significantly associated with academic self-regulation is noteworthy. Previous research has highlighted the importance of social support from parents, teachers, and peers in promoting academic motivation, adjustment, and well-being (Wentzel, 1998; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). However, the absence of a significant association in the present study suggests that perceived social support may not directly correspond with adolescents' academic self-regulation. Academic self-regulation may be more closely related to internal processes such as self-efficacy, goal setting, personal beliefs, and self-monitoring. This interpretation is consistent with the self-regulatory framework proposed by Zimmerman (2000) and Bandura (1997), which emphasizes that learners actively plan, monitor, and regulate their learning based on personal beliefs, experiences, and goals. Thus, although social support may provide an important external source of encouragement, academic self-regulation may depend more strongly on individual motivational and self-regulatory processes.

The present study also found significant negative correlations between verbal victimization, social manipulation, and perceived social support. Adolescents who experienced higher levels of verbal victimization and social manipulation tended to perceive lower levels of social support. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that peer victimization may negatively influence adolescents' interpersonal relationships and perceptions of their social environment. Experiences of victimization may undermine trust and lead adolescents to perceive their peers

as less supportive or more hostile (Holt et al.; Juvonen et al., 2011). Social manipulation, in particular, may be difficult to recognize or communicate because of its indirect and covert nature. Such experiences may contribute to feelings of rejection and reduced emotional support (Foster et al., 2008). Therefore, the negative association observed in the present study highlights the importance of supportive interpersonal environments in the context of peer victimization.

A significant positive correlation was observed between verbal victimization and external regulation. Adolescents experiencing higher levels of verbal victimization reported greater external regulation of their academic behaviour. According to Self-Determination Theory, external regulation involves behaviour that is primarily controlled by external demands, rewards, punishments, or pressures (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Repeated experiences of victimization may affect adolescents' sense of autonomy and confidence in their own decisions, potentially making them more responsive to external expectations. Previous research has also suggested that victimized adolescents may demonstrate greater conformity to social expectations as a means of avoiding interpersonal conflict or rejection (Rivers & Noret, 2010; Juvonen & Graham, 2014). However, given the correlational nature of the present study, the observed relationship should not be interpreted as evidence that verbal victimization causes external regulation. Rather, the findings indicate that these two variables are significantly associated within the present sample.

With regard to gender differences, the present study found no significant differences between boys and girls in physical victimization, verbal victimization, or social manipulation. These findings suggest that experiences of these forms of peer victimization may not differ substantially by gender in the present sample.

Although previous research has identified gender-related patterns in different forms of aggression and victimization, the influence of gender may vary according to social context and the specific form of peer interaction being examined (Rivers & Noret, 2010; Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

A significant gender difference was observed in attack on property, with boys reporting higher levels than girls. This finding is consistent with research indicating that boys may be more frequently involved in direct and overt forms of aggression, including behaviours involving physical damage to objects or belongings (Olweus, 1993). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) similarly distinguished between different forms of aggression and highlighted the importance of considering the specific form of aggressive behavior when examining gender differences. The present finding therefore suggests that gender differences may be more apparent in certain forms of peer victimization than in victimization as a whole.

A significant gender difference was also observed in perceived social support, with girls reporting higher levels than boys. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that girls may report greater perceived social support and may place greater emphasis on maintaining

interpersonal relationships (Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2010). Differences in the perception and expression of social support may also be influenced by social expectations regarding emotional expression and interpersonal relationships. However, these explanations should be interpreted cautiously, as the present study did not directly examine the reasons underlying the gender difference.

Finally, no significant gender difference was found in academic self-regulation. This suggests that academic self-regulation did not vary significantly between boys and girls in the present sample. The finding is broadly consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which conceptualizes motivational and self-regulatory processes in terms of psychological needs and internalized motivation rather than gender-specific mechanisms (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The absence of a significant gender difference further suggests that individual motivational and self-regulatory factors may be more relevant to academic self-regulation than gender alone.

Overall, the findings indicate that peer victimization, perceived social support, and academic self-regulation represent distinct but interconnected aspects of adolescents' experiences. In particular, the associations between verbal victimization, social manipulation, and lower perceived social support highlight the potential importance of supportive interpersonal environments for adolescents experiencing negative peer interactions. The relationship between verbal victimization and external regulation further suggests the need to consider how peer experiences may coexist with adolescents' motivational patterns. At the same time, the absence of significant relationships or gender differences for several variables indicates that these associations are not uniform across all dimensions of adolescent functioning.

V. CONCLUSION

The study highlights significant associations between peer victimization and perceived social support among adolescents. Verbal victimization was also associated with greater external academic regulation, whereas perceived social support was not significantly related to academic self-regulation. Although no gender difference was observed in academic self-regulation, significant differences were found in attack on property and perceived social support. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of considering peer experiences and social support in understanding adolescents' academic and psychosocial functioning.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

The findings highlight the need for supportive peer and adult relationships and inclusive school environments that address peer victimization. Schools and mental health professionals may promote academic self-regulation, coping skills, and healthy peer relationships through targeted interventions. Collaboration between parents, teachers, and counselors can further strengthen support for adolescents experiencing negative peer interactions. The findings may

also inform bullying-prevention initiatives and school policies promoting adolescent well-being.

VII. LIMITATIONS

The present study has certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the study relied exclusively on self-report measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias, response bias, or limitations in adolescents' self-awareness. Second, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among peer victimization, perceived social support, and academic self-regulation. Third, the relatively limited sample size and the use of a specific geographical and institutional setting may restrict the generalizability of the findings to adolescents from different populations and contexts. In addition, cultural and contextual factors that may influence adolescents' experiences of peer victimization, social support, and academic self-regulation were not examined in depth. The study also did not incorporate qualitative methods, which could have provided more detailed insights into adolescents' personal experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies. Furthermore, cyberbullying, which represents an increasingly relevant form of peer victimization, was not specifically examined. Finally, individual characteristics such as resilience and personality traits, which may influence adolescents' perceptions of social support and their approaches to academic self-regulation, were not included in the present study. Future research could address these limitations by using larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal and mixed-method approaches, and by examining digital forms of peer victimization and relevant individual and contextual factors.

➤ Author Contributions

Ms. Reshma conceptualized the study, conducted the initial analysis, and prepared the original manuscript. Data collection and initial preparation of the document was done by Ms. Gopika K. Dr. Mohammad Saleem supervised the study, contributed to the methodology and interpretation, and critically reviewed and edited the manuscript. All authors approved the final manuscript and accept accountability for the work.

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➤ Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

➤ Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

Ethical clearance was obtained from Lovely Professional University before data collection. Permission was obtained from the relevant authorities and participating institutions, parents and the participants.

➤ *Data Availability*

Data can be shared upon request without any personal information.

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